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Protestant Pavilion Closes at Brussels Fair

(Brussels) - The Protestant Pavilion closed on October 19 at the Brussels International Exhibition with a special Communion service for those who had worked in the Pavilion since the fair's opening day on April 20.

The simple service, in English, French, German and Flemish, consisted of hymns, prayers and Scripture readings. Then the 150 worshippers stood in a circle before the chapel's giant copper cross to receive the bread and the wine. Inside, there was complete quiet. Outside, part of a crowd of 700,000 persons pushed by the building during the fair's closing hours; popular songs could be heard throughout the service from loudspeakers on the fair grounds; passers by pressed their noses against the chapel's coloured windows. Taking part in the service were Pastor T.C.E. Da Costa of Antwerp and the Rev. Kermit Morrison of Brussels, Pastor Arnold Nieland of Dusseldorf, and Professor Maurice Descamps of Brussels.

More than half a million persons visited the exhibition in the pavilion or attended services in the chapel. Every day there were 15-minute services at noon and in the afternoon, organ recitals, Friday night programmes and worship on Sunday. Many of the visitors were Roman Catholics - laymen, priests and nuns. For many Belgians in the predominantly Roman Catholic country, the pavilion was their first contact with the Protestant churches.

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Money problems still confront the Belgian Protestants, who have worked determinedly for the pavilion when time and again it looked as if the needed funds would not be available. Money is still needed to pay final bills for the pavilion. And about $110,000 must be raised if the building is to be moved to a new site and "kept for Belgium" as an ecumenical centre. Offers to buy the building are numerous, but Pastor Pieter Fagel of Brussels, who has been the leader of the project, is holding off, hoping that the needed money will be assured before the November 30 deadline for getting the pavilion off the fair grounds. One of the most unusual offers to date has come from a Dutch zoo which wants to buy the pavilion and use it for a monkey house.

Money has come from the Netherlands and Germany to be used for the re-erection of the pavilion and a committee is at work in the United States. Pastor Fagel sails on October 27 for the United States where he will meet with interested groups in Washington and New York. A laymen's committee in the US raised $88,000 for the building and running of the pavilion during the fair. Other money has come from Switzerland, Scotland, New Zealand, France, Belgium.

Looking at the future, the Belgian Protestant Federation has approved a plan calling for the building to be "re-erected, in modified form, on a new site, as a permanent centre of worship and ecumenical activities". It would be under the auspices and ownership of the federation.

The centre would be rented to a congregation for regular Sunday worship throughout the year. Between April and September of each year, the centre would be used on week days to receive ecumenical groups from abroad and to train representatives of Belgian Protestant congregations "in the practical consequences of the ecumenical movement for their congregational life". The federation hopes to ask the Ecumenical Council in the Netherlands to send teams to train laymen in evangelism and to visit Flemish-speaking congregations in Belgium. A second proposal is to request Swiss and French churches to send similar teams for French speaking groups. In addition, other groups from abroad could use the building for orientation courses on European church life, for study commissions and meetings of pastors, teachers and theologians, and for youth groups and lay groups "to introduce them to the life and work of the developing organizations for European unity in the perspective of the Christian gospel". Teacher training courses, short ecumenical lay courses and other projects will be planned for the winter months.

E.P.S., Geneva

Treason Trial Indictment Dropped in South Africa

(Pretoria) - The treason indictment against ninety-one men and women was dropped last week by the South African government, though observers predict that a new indictment, with amended charges, will be made.

The defendants, most of them African, were arrested in December 1956 and most were members of groups opposed to the government's racial segregation policy. In the mass arrests 156 persons were taken into custody but the charges against 65 were dropped before the trial began last August 1. The accused have not been discharged and are still on bail.

The South Africa Treason Trial Defence Fund has announced that funds are still needed and a spokesman has pointed out that there is an "immense amount" of rehabilitation work to be done among the families of the defendants.

E.P.S., Geneva

Four-Way Merger Approved by United Lutherans

Dayton, Ohio) - The proposed merger of four Lutheran churches in the United States has been overwhelmingly approved by the fourth group - the United Lutheran Church, at its twenty-first biennial convention in Dayton, Ohio. Plans for the merger have already been approved by the Augustana Lutheran Church, the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church (Suomi Synod) and the American Evangelical Lutheran Church.

The new church, as yet unnamed, will have about three million members, 80 per cent of them from the United Lutheran Church. The constitution for the new denomination is expected to be ready by the middle of 1960.

E.P.S., Geneva

Provost Grüber Resigns from Office

(Berlin) - Dr. Heinrich Grüber, representative of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) to the government of the German Democratic Republic, has resigned after almost nine years' work.

At the close of a meeting held on October 9 - 10 in Berlin, the Council of the EKD stated that it received Dr. Grüber's resignation "with painful regret", and thanked him for his devoted service.

No one will be appointed to replace Dr. Grüber. Future negotiations with the DDR government will be conducted through Berlin church officials.

Dr. Grüber, before leaving for four weeks in Israel, stated that for some time he had no longer received a hearing from the authorities in East Berlin. He said contacts had deteriorated, especially since last April's All-German Synod in Berlin, when Dr. Grüber publicly repudiated attacks on Bishop Otto Dibelius made in the Communist press of Eastern Germany. He did not take part in the negotiations between representatives of the church and the East German government which led to the agreement between church and state last June and July (see EPS No. 30).

At its meeting in Berlin the Council of the EKD dealt in detail with the situation of the church in both parts of Germany. It welcomed the fact that the negotiations are continuing with the East German Government, especially with President Otto Grotewohl.

E.P.S., Geneva

Austrian Protestants Re-open Training College

(Vienna) - The only Protestnat training college for teachers in Austria, which was nationalised by the Nazi régime in 1938 and completely closed after the end of the war, has been opened again at Oberschützer, Burgenland. The opening ceremony was attended by representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and of the government as well as Protestant church leaders.

In Austria's schools the percentage of Protestant teachers is much lower than the percentage of Protestants in the population. Concern was expressed by Protestants earlier this year, when a second Catholic training college for teachers was opened in Burgenland, where the percentage of Protestants is higher than in any other province in Austria. (See EPS No. 15.) In addition to the Protestant college there are fifteen Catholic and fourteen state teacher-training institutions in Austria.

E.P.S., Geneva

Presbyterians Begin Study of Theme for World Meeting

(Geneva) - Twenty-five groups in theological seminaries, as well as local church groups, are taking part in long-term study of the theme of the eighteenth meeting of the General Council of the World Presbyterian Alliance, set for next summer in Campinas, Brazil. The Theme of the meeting is "The Servant Lord and His Servant People". Four sub-topics will deal with "The Service of Theology", "The Service of the Church", "The Service of the Christian" and "The Service of the State".

The Executive Committee of the Alliance has announced that study materials, including a guide, have been prepared, under the direction of its theological secretary, the Rev. Lewis S. Mudge. E.P.S., Geneva

Pastor Zoltan Kaldy Elected Successor to Bishop Ordass

(Geneva) - At the October meeting of the Church Council of the Southern Diocese of the Lutheran Church in Hungary, Pastor Zoltan Kaldy was elected Bishop. Pastor Kaldy, thirty-nine, will succeed Bishop Lajos Ordass (see E.P.S. No. 26). The only candidate whose name was unanimously approved by the Council of the Southern Diocese, Pastor Kaldy will take office in November.

Until 1954 the new bishop, who is closely connected with the revivalist movement, worked as pastor of the parish of Pécs. He wrote regularly in the paper published by the revivalist movement, until its publication was stopped by the government. He also wrote articles in "Evangelikus Elet", the paper of the Hungarian Reformed Church. E.P.S., Geneva

Sahara Area to Have Second Protestant Chapel

(Algiers) - Ouargla, frequently referred to as the future "petroleum capital of the Sahara", is to have a Protestant chapel.

Situated in the centre of the growing town, the church will be erected under the auspices of the French Reformed Church through its military chaplaincy, which also serves the expanding population in the Sahara desert.

An earlier chapel was built at Colomb-Béchard in 1953.

Money for the new project is being raised. A young chaplain is already working in a military hut on the building site and fans out from his base to serve an enormous surrounding area. A house will be built for him next to the church, and probably also a social centre. E.P.S., Geneva

Archbishop Clarifies "End of World" Statement

(London) - The Archbishop of Canterbury has clarified a recent much-discussed statement he made, that "for all I know, it is within the providence of God that the human race should destroy itself in a hydrogen war". Dr. Geoffrey F. Fisher, writing in the current issue of "Frontier" magazine, said that what he meant was that "neither you nor I can tell whether, in the providence of God, the human race will end by the effects of nuclear war or by some other means, or not at all". By the word providence, the Archbishop explained that he meant "that it may conceivably be within the foreknowledge of God".

The Archbishop pointed out that his original statement was intended to suggest that fear for the end of the human race was no ground on which to base a policy in regard to nuclear weapons.

His original statement was included in a new book by Phi ip Toynbee, "The Fearful Choice - A Debate on Nuclear Policy". E.P.S., Geneva

In Brief

In a series of foreign language broadcasts the Moscow Radio has been emphasising the theme that cooperation between Christians and Marxists "is possible after all". The broadcasts have cited Poland and Hungary as examples and said that workers there "do not oppose their Communist government although they are Roman Catholics at heart".

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The first Bible House in East Africa has been opened in Nairobi and will be used to distribute Scriptures in more than fifty languages.

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A book explaining the organization, status, activities and church-state relations of the Russian Orthodox Church has been published in seven languages by the Moscow Patriarchate. Patriarch Alexei, in the book's preface, says he hopes it will help non-Russian readers "to abandon preconceived ideas of the status of the Russian Orthodox Church" and will aid in understanding the "real character" of its relationship with the Soviet state. The book is available in Russian, English, German, French, Italian, Spanish and Arabic.

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The largest exhibition ever held in Yugoslavia of copies of the renowned Medieval frescoes found on the walls of Serbian Orthodox monasteries has been opened at the national museum in Belgrade. More than 350 reproductions of the wall paintings are being shown. Representatives of the Serbian Orthodox Church attended the opening ceremony.

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The first services in the crypt of the new Coventry Cathedral will be held on New Year's Eve, although the church itself will not be completed and consecrated until 1962.

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Serbian Orthodox Bishop Vasilije Kostic of Banjaluka, Bosnia, has been placed under house arrest, according to reports from Belgrade.

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Polish authorities have denied permission for regular Roman Catholic religious broadcasts over the government-controlled radio. The announcement by Mr. Wlodzimierz Soroski, radio network director, said that "if such a privilege is granted to the Roman Catholic Church, other denominations in Poland would request the same". He added that "as there is a strict separation of church and state in Poland, I see no reason for helping the dissemination of religious beliefs. The state wants to remain objective toward these problems".

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Protestant Congregations in the United States were urged to raise their concern for "human rights and responsibilities" in a message from the National Council of the Churches in the USA. The message was for use in churches on World Order Sunday, October 19. "Christians feel impelled to cooperate with all who sincerely seek to promote these rights and freedoms throughout the world," the council said.

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The National Council of YMCAs' Greater London Development Scheme was launched on October 15 with a formal dinner in Mansion House attended by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Purpose of the scheme is to double the capacity of YMCA hostels in London.

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An exhibition on "Luther and the Reformation in Nuremberg" was opened recently to mark the 475th anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther. The exhibit contains papers and documents, mostly dating from the sixteenth century, which have a direct bearing on the Reformation in the free city of Nuremberg.

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A new Helsinki church includes the largest parish-centre in the city. Closed circuit television will transmit services to any of the other rooms in the centre. From a pulpit outside the church, large gatherings can be addressed in the open air.

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An Amsterdam church holds two lunch-hour services every week-day, for office and factory workers and for school children. Preachers are chosen from various churches.

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The first "Festival of Religious Films" in Great Britain will be held in Belfast, Northern Ireland, in November. The programme includes the American documentary film about Albert Schweitzer, and a film on the life of Christ which has until recently been banned in England by the censor.

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During October the national Church of Sweden and nearly all the Swedish free churches are cooperating in a campaign to stimulate church attendance.

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Following the Quemoy cease-fire, the Lutheran World Federation shipped quantities of food and used clothing to the island to relieve distress. The LWF had established small relief depots on the island in December 1957, but these were totally depleted.

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Pastor Dieter Mendt has been appointed student chaplain at Leipzig University in succession to Dr. Siegfried Schmutzler, who was sentenced on November 26, 1957, to five years' imprisonment.

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At the Diaconal Conference of the EKD's meeting at Stuttgart-Korntal, the town of Dessau was unanimously selected as "church-reconstruction town for 1959/60". From April 1959 onward funds for church-reconstruction in Dessau will be collected in Protestant churches in Germany. The fund for help to Rostock, "church-reconstruction town, 1957/58", remains open.

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Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Ambrose of Phthiotis, who attended many ecumenical conferences, including the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches, died last week in Lamia, Greece, his diocesan see.

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An autonomous Macedonian Orthodox Church, linked with the Serbian Orthodox Church, has been formed in Macedonian Yugoslavia. The church has elected Serbian Orthodox Bishop Dositej Stojkovic, himself a Macedonian, as its Metropolitan.

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Twelve sermons on Christian unity, preached by well-known Christian leaders, have been published as a book by the Bethany Press, St. Louis, Mo., USA, with the title "Preaching on Christian Unity". The preachers include W.A. Visser 't Hooft, J.E. Lesslie Newbigin, Henry Knox Sherrill, D. Albert Bereczky and the Metropolitan James of Melita. The editor is Robert Tobias.

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Two well-known German church leaders will visit the USA in the near future. Bishop Friedrich Wunderlich, leader of Germany's Methodists, will attend the meeting of Methodist bishops in Cincinnati and lecture in American universities during November. Lutheran Bishop Hanns Lilje of Hannover flies to preach in Portland, Oregon, and in Tacoma and Seattle during Reformation commemorations in the second week of November. E.P.S., Geneva